Griffin Primary School

SEMH Policy

Reviewed By	Approved By	Date of Approval	Version Approved
Clare Hart	Local Governing Body	4.2.22	1.0

Aims

This policy outlines the framework for Griffin Primary School to meet its duty in providing and ensuring a high quality of education to all pupils, including pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties.

Through the successful implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- Promote a positive outlook regarding pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Eliminate prejudice towards pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Promote equal opportunities for pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Ensure all pupils with SEMH difficulties are identified and appropriately supported – minimising the risk of SEMH difficulties escalating into physical harm.

Common SEMH difficulties

Anxiety

Anxiety refers to feeling fearful or panicked, breathless, tense, fidgety, sick, irritable, tearful or having difficulty sleeping. Anxiety can significantly affect a pupil's ability to develop, learn and sustain and maintain friendships. Specialists reference the following diagnostic categories:

- Generalised anxiety disorder: This is a long-term condition which causes people to feel anxious about a wide range of situations and issues, rather than one specific event.
- Panic disorder: This is a condition in which people have recurring and regular panic attacks, often for no obvious reason.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD): This is a mental health condition where a person has obsessive thoughts (unwanted, unpleasant thoughts, images or urges that repeatedly enter their mind, causing them anxiety) and compulsions (repetitive behaviour or mental acts that they feel they must carry out to try to prevent an obsession coming true).
- Specific phobias: This is the excessive fear of an object or a situation, to the extent that it causes an anxious response such as a panic attack (e.g. school phobia).
- Separation anxiety disorder: This disorder involves worrying about being away from home, or about being far away from parents, at a level that is much more severe than normal for a pupil's age.
- Social phobia: This is an intense fear of social or performance situations.
- Agoraphobia: This refers to a fear of being in situations where escape might be difficult or help would be unavailable if things go wrong.

Depression

Depression refers to feeling excessively low or sad. Depression can significantly affect a pupil's ability to develop, learn or maintain and sustain friendships. Depression can often lead to other issues such as behavioural problems. Generally, a diagnosis of depression will refer to one of the following:

- **Major depressive disorder (MDD):** A pupil with MDD will show several depressive symptoms to the extent that they impair work, social or personal functioning.
- **Dysthymic disorder**: This is less severe than MDD and characterised by a pupil experiencing a daily depressed mood for at least two years.

Hyperkinetic disorders

Hyperkinetic disorders refer to a pupil who is excessively easily distracted, impulsive or inattentive. If a pupil is diagnosed with a hyperkinetic disorder, it will be one of the following:

- **Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD):** This has three characteristic types of behaviour: inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. While some children show the signs of all three characteristics, which is called 'combined type ADHD', other children diagnosed show signs of only inattention, hyperactivity or impulsiveness.
- **Hyperkinetic disorder**: This is a more restrictive diagnosis but is broadly similar to severe combined type ADHD, in that signs of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness must all be present. The core symptoms must also have been present from before the age of seven, and must be evident in two or more settings, e.g. at school and home.

Attachment disorders

Attachment disorders refer to the excessive distress experienced when a child is separated from a special person in their life, like a parent. Pupils suffering from attachment disorders can struggle to make secure attachments with peers. Researchers generally agree that there are four main factors that influence attachment disorders, these are:

- Opportunity to establish a close relationship with a primary caregiver.
- The quality of caregiving.
- The child's characteristics.
- Family context.

Eating disorders

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses which affect an individual's relationship with food. Eating disorders often emerge when worries about weight begin to dominate a person's life.

Substance misuse

Substance misuse is the use of harmful substances, e.g. drugs and alcohol.

Deliberate self-harm

Deliberate self-harm is a person intentionally inflicting physical pain upon themselves.

Post-traumatic stress

Post-traumatic stress is recurring trauma due to experiencing or witnessing something deeply shocking or disturbing. If symptoms persist, a person can develop post-traumatic stress disorder.

Roles and responsibilities

The school's senior leadership team and SENCO are responsible for:

- **Preventing mental health and wellbeing difficulties**: By creating a safe and calm environment, where mental health problems are less likely to occur, the leadership can improve the mental health and wellbeing of the school community and instil resilience in pupils. A preventative approach includes teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing these messages in our activities and ethos.
- **Identifying mental health and wellbeing difficulties:** By equipping staff with the knowledge required, early and accurate identification of emerging problems is enabled.
- **Providing early support for pupils experiencing mental health and wellbeing difficulties:** By raising awareness and employing efficient referral processes, the school's leadership can help pupils access evidence-based early support and interventions.
- **Accessing specialist support to assist pupils with mental health and wellbeing difficulties**: By working effectively with external agencies, the school can provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.
- **Identifying and supporting pupils with SEND**: As part of this duty, the school's leadership considers how to use some of the SEND resources to provide support for pupils with mental health difficulties that amount to SEND.
- **Identifying where wellbeing concerns represent safeguarding concerns**: Where mental health and wellbeing concerns could be an indicator of abuse, neglect or exploitation, the school will ensure that appropriate safeguarding referrals are made in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Ensuring that those teaching or working with pupils with SEMH difficulties are aware of their needs and have arrangements in place to meet them.
- Ensuring that teachers monitor and review pupils' academic and emotional progress during the course of the academic year.
- Ensuring that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out their functions, in a similar way to other important strategic roles within the school.
- On an annual basis, carefully reviewing the quality of teaching for pupils at risk of underachievement, as a core part of the school's performance management arrangements.
- Ensuring that staff members understand the strategies used to identify and support pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Ensuring that procedures and policies for the day-to-day running of the school do not directly or indirectly discriminate against pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Establishing and maintaining a culture of high expectations and including pupils with SEMH difficulties in all opportunities that are available to other pupils. Consulting health and social care professionals, pupils and parents to ensure the needs of pupils with SEMH difficulties are effectively supported.
- Keeping parents and relevant staff up-to-date with any changes or concerns involving pupils with SEMH difficulties.

- Ensuring staff members have a good understanding of the mental health support services that are available in their local area, both through the NHS and voluntary sector organisations.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Collaborating with the governing board and headteacher as part of the SLT, to determine the strategic development of SEMH policies and provisions in the school.
- Undertaking day-to-day responsibilities for the successful operation of the SEMH Policy.
- Supporting the subject teachers in the further assessment of a pupil's particular strengths and areas for improvement, and advising on the effective implementation of support.

Teaching staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of the signs of SEMH difficulties.
- Planning and reviewing support for their pupils with SEMH difficulties in collaboration with parents, the SENCO and, where appropriate, the pupils themselves.
- Setting high expectations for every pupil and aiming to teach them the full curriculum, whatever their prior attainment.
- Planning lessons to address potential areas of difficulty to ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving their full potential, and that every pupil with SEMH difficulties will be able to study the full national curriculum.
- Being responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class.
- Being aware of the needs, outcomes sought and support provided to any pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Keeping the relevant figures of authority up-to-date with any changes in behaviour, academic developments and causes of concern. The relevant figures of authority include: SENCO/headteacher/subject leader.

Creating a supportive whole-school culture

Griffin Primary School have a clear vision for good mental health and wellbeing with the whole school community. The school utilises various strategies to support pupils who are experiencing high levels of psychological stress, or who are at risk of developing SEMH problems, including:

- Teaching about mental health and wellbeing through curriculum subjects such as: - PSHE (JIGSAW), RE, PE
- Counselling through the use of ELSA, Pet Therapy and other strategies
- Positive classroom management
- Developing pupils' social skills

- Working with parents and carers
- Peer support.
- Educational Psychologist
- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Outreach Services – Steps to Success (BVWH); and Boulevard and Sullivan Centre

Pupils know where to go for further information and support should they wish to talk about their mental health needs or concerns over a peer's or family member's mental health or wellbeing.

Identifying signs of SEMH difficulties

The school is committed to identifying pupils with SEMH difficulties at the earliest stage possible. Staff are trained to know how to identify possible mental health problems and understand what to do if they spot signs of emerging difficulties. Staff understand what indicators they should be aware of that may point to SEMH difficulties, such as behavioural problems, pupils distancing themselves from other pupils or changes in attitude. Staff know to discuss these concerns with the SENCO.

Staff will observe, identify and monitor the behaviour of pupils potentially displaying signs of SEMH difficulties; however, only medical professionals will make a diagnosis of a mental health condition.

Staff are aware of the signs that may indicate if a pupil is struggling with their SEMH. CPD to ensure that staff can recognise common symptoms of mental health problems, understand what represents a concern, and know what to do if they believe they have spotted a developing problem is provided. Signs of SEMH difficulties may include, but are not limited to, the following list:

- Anxiety
- Low mood
- Being withdrawn
- Avoiding risks
- Unable to make choices
- Low self-worth
- Isolating themselves
- Refusing to accept praise
- Failure to engage
- Poor personal presentation
- Lethargy/apathy
- Daydreaming
- Unable to make and maintain friendships
- Speech anxiety/reluctance to speak
- Task avoidance
- Challenging behaviour
- Restlessness/over-activity
- Non-compliance
- Mood swings

- Impulsivity
- Physical aggression
- Verbal aggression
- Perceived injustices
- Disproportionate reactions to situations
- Difficulties with change/transitions
- Absconding
- Eating issues
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of personal boundaries
- Poor awareness of personal space.

When the school suspects that a pupil is experiencing mental health difficulties, the following graduated response is employed:

- An assessment is undertaken to establish a clear analysis of the pupil's needs • A plan is set out to determine how the pupil will be supported
- Action is taken to provide that support
- Regular reviews are undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the provision, and changes are made as necessary.

Staff members, supported by the SENCO, discuss concerns regarding SEMH difficulties with the parents/carers of pupils who have SEMH difficulties. Any concerns expressed by parents, other pupils, colleagues and the pupil in question seriously. Depending on the concerns raised, parents/carers and pupils may be directed to seek and receive support elsewhere, including from their GP, NHS services, trained professionals working in CAMHS, voluntary organisations and other sources.

The SENCO will take into account all information about the pupil and considers all previous assessments and progress over time, to then refer the pupil to the appropriate services.

Staff understand that persistent mental health difficulties can lead to a pupil developing SEND. If this occurs, the Head of School ensures that correct provisions are implemented to provide the best learning conditions for the pupil, such as providing school counselling. Both the pupil and their parents are involved in any decision-making concerning what support the pupil needs.

Vulnerable pupils

Some pupils are particularly vulnerable to SEMH difficulties. These 'vulnerable groups' are more likely to experience a range of adverse circumstances that increase the risk of mental health problems. Staff are aware of the increased likelihood of SEMH difficulties in pupils in vulnerable groups and remain vigilant to early signs of difficulties.

Vulnerable groups include the following:

- Pupils who have experienced abuse, neglect, exploitation or other adverse contextual circumstances
- Children in need or with a child protection plan
- CLA or PLAC

- Socio-economically disadvantaged pupils, including those in receipt of, or previously in receipt of, free school meals and the pupil premium

SEND and SEMH

Griffin Primary School recognises it is well-placed to identify SEND at an early stage and works with partner agencies to address these needs. The school's full SEND identification and support procedures are available in the SEND Policy. Where pupils have certain types of SEND, there is an increased likelihood of mental health problems. For example, children with autism or learning difficulties are significantly more likely to experience anxiety.

Early intervention to address the underlying causes of disruptive behaviour includes an assessment of whether appropriate support is in place to address the pupil's SEND. The graduated response is used to determine the correct level of support to offer (this is used as good practice throughout the school, regardless of whether or not a pupil has SEND).

We recognise that not all pupils with mental health difficulties have SEND.

The SENCO ensures that staff understand how the school identifies and meets pupils' needs, provides advice and support as needed, and liaises with external SEND professionals as necessary.

Risk factors and protective factors

There are a number of risk factors beyond being part of a vulnerable group that are associated with an increased likelihood of SEMH difficulties, these are known as risk factors. There are also factors associated with a decreased likelihood of SEMH difficulties, these are known as protective factors.

 The table below displays common risk factors for SEMH difficulties (as outlined by the DfE) that staff remain vigilant of, and the protective factors that staff look for and notice when missing from a pupil:

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the child	- Genetic influences - Low IQ and learning disabilities - Specific development delay or neuro-diversity - Communication difficulties - Difficult temperament - Physical illness - Academic failure - Low self-esteem	- Secure attachment experience - Outgoing temperament as an infant - Good communication skills and sociability - Being a planner and having a belief in control - Humour - A positive attitude

	Risk factors	Protective factors
		• Experiences of success and achievement • Faith or spirituality • Capacity to reflect
In the family	• Overt parental conflict including domestic violence • Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) • Inconsistent or unclear discipline • Hostile and rejecting relationships • Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs • Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect • Parental psychiatric illness • Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder • Death and loss – including loss of friendship	• At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) • Affection • Clear, consistent discipline • Support for education • Supportive long-term relationships or the absence of severe discord
In the school	• Bullying including online (cyberbullying) • Discrimination • Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships • Deviant peer influences • Peer pressure • Peer-on-peer abuse • Poor pupil-to-teacher/school staff relationship	• Clear policies on behaviour and bullying • Staff behaviour policy (also known as code of conduct) • 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems • A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health • Good pupil-to-teacher/school staff relationships • Positive classroom management • A sense of belonging • Positive peer influences

		- Positive friendships - Effective safeguarding and child protection policies. - An effective early help process - Understand their role in, and are part of, effective multi-agency working - Appropriate procedures in place to ensure staff are confident enough to raise concerns about policies and processes and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively
In the community	- Socio-economic disadvantage - Homelessness - Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events - Discrimination - Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation - Other significant life events	- Wider supportive network - Good housing - High standard of living - High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying - Opportunities for valued social roles - Range of sport/leisure activities.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.